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In Memoriam:
Congressman Bob Matsui

Office of the
Democratic Leader
U. S. Capitol - H-204
Washington, DC 20515
ATTN: Outreach Office

Phone: 202-225-0100
Fax: 202-226-0939

E-mail:
Dem_Leader_Pelosi@mail.house.gov
Web:
democraticleader.house.gov
www.HouseDemocrats.gov

Dear Friends:

Happy New Year! **The Pelosi Report** has a new look for the 109th Congress, but it will continue to serve as a source of information about the issues affecting the African American community.

As we begin the 109th Congress, I am once again humbled to serve as House Democratic Leader. It is a privilege to lead such a wonderfully diverse Democratic Caucus. During this Congress, House Democrats will work even harder to widen the circle of prosperity; expand access to health care; promote opportunity by ensuring a vibrant public education system and by making college affordable; and build safe communities free of crime and drugs, and with a clean and healthy environment. Above all, we must guarantee our national security and honor the service and sacrifice of our troops by making certain they have the tools and training they need to do all that we ask of them.

This first edition of 2005 is dedicated to the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King had the ability to draw hope from times of challenge. These are certainly times of challenge. In the past few weeks, we have lost two of our most pioneering and courageous colleagues. Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman elected to Congress and Bob Matsui — a dedicated public servant who served with distinction and integrity. We have also witnessed the unspeakable devastation in South Asia.

Dr. King said that, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." It is from these words that we draw hope and the courage to stand.

Have a blessed New Year!

Sincerely,

Nancy Pelosi

House Democratic Leader



Now More Than Ever! Remember! Act! Celebrate! Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"An individual has not started living fully until they can rise above the narrow confines of individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of humanity...Every person must decide, at some point, whether they will walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness. This is the judgment. Life's most persistent and urgent question is, What are you doing for others?" - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 8/11/57

"Unbought and Unbossed": In Memory of The Honorable Shirley Chisholm



On January 3, 2005 the nation lost an American heroine. Shirley Chisholm was the first African American woman elected to the U.S. Congress and the first to campaign for the presidency. Ms. Chisholm was known for her incisive debating

style and uncompromising integrity. Chisholm was 80. Below is an excerpt from Leader Pelosi's statement in memory of the former Congresswoman:

"A teacher by training, Shirley Chisholm fought in Congress to improve education, particularly early childhood education, and she became known as an expert on child welfare. She was resolute in her fight for equality, standing up for women's rights, and for civil rights. She was known and respected across the political spectrum for her deep personal integrity and strong moral compass. She was, as she said, 'unbought and unbossed.' We will miss her greatly."

Ms. Chisholm represented New York's Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn and served from 1969 until retiring in 1983. She was a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Social Security Strengthen, Don't Raid!

The White House is working to convince Americans that Social Security is in crisis. The Administration wants to cut benefits by more than 40 percent to help pay the trillions of dollars that would be needed for private accounts, but the truth is that private accounts will do nothing to improve the financial health of Social Security. Private accounts will, however, drain funding that otherwise could have been used to shore up the system. To cut Social Security benefits to pay for risky private accounts would be unjust and unsuccessful.

Democrats look forward to receiving a detailed proposal from the President and are eager to work cooperatively with him to strengthen and improve Social Security. We want to work together to ensure that America honors its promise to those who have worked hard, played by the rules, and earned a secure retirement.

African Americans and Social Security

- ❑ As the only source of retirement income for 40 percent of African American seniors, the Social Security Administration estimates the poverty rate for elderly blacks would more than double - from 24 percent to 65 percent - without Social Security.
- ❑ Social Security's disability and survivor benefits are extremely important for black families. Although only 12 percent of the U.S. population, African Americans are almost 18 percent of those receiving disability benefits.
- ❑ African American children represent 23 percent of all children receiving survivor benefits.

Defending the Right to Vote

"America is the beacon of democracy to the world. We must never forget the power of our own example to those who aspire for freedom throughout the world. So let's respect this debate today for what it is about -- ensuring the foundation of our very own democracy and sending a message to the world that we are truly protective of our Constitution and that we honor the oath of office that we take to protect and defend the Constitution."

- House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)



Led by Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH), House Democrats challenged the official certification of Ohio's electoral

votes for the 2004 Presidential election. The goal of this maneuver was not to overturn the results of November 2, 2004, but to address the widespread voter problems occurring across the country, especially in poor and minority neighborhoods. As House Republicans try to cloud the issue and insist that America "get over it," Democrats bring new attention to defending the Constitutional right to vote. The disenfranchisement of thousands of Americans is unacceptable; an electoral process that denies the right to vote to even one single American is flawed and must be fixed.

A Nation Joins to Mourn Congressman Robert T. Matsui



It is with great sadness that we observe the parting of the Honorable Robert T. Matsui. Friends and colleagues from throughout the country gathered to recognize the life and accomplishments of Matsui, who had dedicated his life to serving the 5th district of California for the past 26 years. The ceremony was marked with statements by President Bill Clinton, Leader Pelosi, Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), Sen. Hillary Clinton

(D-NY), Speaker J. Dennis Hastert (R-IL), and former Secretary of Treasury Robert E. Rubin.

"With him gone all of us have to stand a little taller. We have to try to fill the shoes and fill the vacuum. We will be able to replace him in the House and on the Ways and Means Committee. But never will we be able to replace him in our hearts for the high standards that he set for all Americans. God bless you, Bob."

- Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY), Ranking Democrat House Ways and Means Committee

Congressional Black Caucus on First Day of 109th Congress

At the opening of the 109th Congress, Leader Pelosi saluted the hard work and leadership of the Congressional Black Caucus as new Members of Congress joined returning Members in taking their ceremonial oath of office at the Library of Congress. Five new Members and 38 standing Members were sworn in to the CBC on the first day of the 109th Congress. The CBC now has 43 members -- the largest number since its founding in 1971. Congressman Mel Watt (D-NC) was sworn in as CBC Chair.



"I am pleased to stand side-by-side with the distinguished Members of the Congressional Black Caucus as they continue their long tradition of fighting for opportunity, equality and prosperity for African Americans and for all Americans," Pelosi said. "Today, the Congressional Black Caucus makes history, and together we will make progress."